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CHRISTMAS
THE BIRTH OF THE LORD

ABC

FIRST READING

A son is give to us.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

9:2-4, 6-7

Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light.
And it shines upon everyone who lives in the land of darkest shadows.

Our Lord, you have made your nation stronger.
Because of you, its people are glad and celebrate
like workers at harvest time
or soldiers dividing what they have taken.

You have broken the power
of those who oppressed and enslaved your people.
You have rescued them as you did from Midian.

For us a child has been born.
A son has been given to us,
and he will be our ruler.
His names will be:
Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God,
Eternal Father and Prince of Peace.

His power will never end,
and peace will last forever.
He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong.
He will always rule with honesty and justice.
The Lord All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

96:1-2a, 2b-3, 11-12a

R. (Luke 2:11) Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Sing a new song to the Lord!
Everyone on this earth,
sing praises to the Lord,
sing and praise his name.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Day after day announce,
"The Lord has saved us!"
Tell every nation on earth,
"The Lord is wonderful
and does marvelous things!"

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Tell the heavens and the earth
to be glad and celebrate!
Command the ocean to roar
with all of its creatures
and the fields to rejoice
with all of their crops.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

SECOND READING

God's grace has been revealed to all people.

A reading from the first letter of Paul to Titus

3:4-6

Brothers and sisters:

God our Savior showed us how good and kind he is.
He saved us because of his mercy,
and not because of any good things that we have done.

God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit.
He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning.
God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us his Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

ALLELUIA

Luke 2:10-11

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Good news and great joy to all the world:
today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Today a Savior has been born for you.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 2:1-14

Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people
To be listed in record books.
These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed.
So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea.
Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown,
and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem.
She was soon going to have a baby,
and while they were there,
she gave birth to her first-born son.
She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him in a manger,
because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night in the fields near Bethlehem
some shepherds were guarding their sheep.
All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord,
and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them.
The shepherds were frightened.
But the angel said, "Don't be afraid!
I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy.
This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you.
He is Christ the Lord.
You will know who he is,
because you will find him dressed in baby clothes
and lying in a manger."

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven
And joined in praising God.
They said: "Praise God in heaven!
Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God."

The gospel of the Lord.

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Christ is born this day!

The Advent of our God is born this day!

**Go up to the highest mountain and proclaim,
“Here is your God!”**

Readings:

Isaiah 9:2-4, 6-7

Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 11-12a

Titus 3:4-6

Luke 2:1-14

The prophets revealed God's will for the Israelites whether they wanted to listen or not. Jesus is born of the House of David. The lengthy genealogy of God's Promise, Fidelity and unconditional Love is proclaimed for us this day. The Hebrew Scriptures begin the Story of God's promise to send a redeemer, often to a people that resisted hearing what God had to say. The Church has given us this graced filled season to remember the earliest Story of our faith; the Christian Story. We now celebrate the Season of Christmas. Traditionally, this is a time to reflect upon the fulfillment of God's Word to all peoples: "This is my beloved Son, listen to him!"

The Story began with the reminder that we are a people in need of a redeemer to free us from our inclination to turn away from God: Sin. Jesus is born among us, like us in human nature, the Incarnate Word of God - God with us. God promised the young woman, Mary, to be ever present, to be her strength, to guide her along the way. Mary, Joseph and Jesus, the holy family, must continue to travel from place to place, to seek refuge from an ever increasing dangerous political unrest. The birth of Jesus stirs the hearts of many; those who have long prayed for his coming; the poor, the marginalized, the throw-away people of society. There are also those who have long awaited the promised Messiah: our Jewish brothers and sisters. In the first century, as the Scriptures mention and the writings of Josephus, a Jewish chronicler for the Romans, who wrote about the Military battles of the Romans and the Chosen People; thus they hoped for a Messiah that would be for them a Religious Leader, a Political Leader and still yet a Military Leader – to wage a battle on their enemies. As we witness the reality of the Middle East a religious, political, and military leadership is still longed for.

The Birth of Christ, the Messiah, the Chosen One of God, became for Christians a promise of peace and love; a message contrary to the cultural milieu of the first century. This historical event of birth of Jesus took place in a prepared, simple, and ordinary place; birthed from a young, simple, ordinary woman, named Mary (Miriam); and fostered by an ordinary man, named Joseph. Too often we let this reality become a part of the Christmas Story.

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Mary and Joseph were ordinary people, living in an ordinary household of the first century. Their lives, however, were not so ordinary, but rather, ordinary people who responded in faith to an invitation of God to live life in an extraordinary way – in their humanity.

We too, are called by our baptismal call, to live extraordinary lives as witnesses of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We are given three-fold GIFTS to assist us, namely: *The Word of God-Scriptures*, God's unconditional gift of *Grace*, and a *Catholic Christian Community*, to strengthen and foster our faith commitment to live as a disciple of Christ. Mary pondered the call, proclaimed her 'Yes' to God, and to live her call to holiness, for the sake of the people of God. She is the first disciple to witness the Incarnate Word of God – our Redeemer, within her womb.

- How have you given witness to the birth of Christ within you?
- How well do you live your call to holiness; to live as an ordinary person extraordinarily?
- Our baptism calls us to bear witness to the Living Word of God, the Scriptures. How well have you live your baptismal call to be Living Saints?
- The Incarnate Word of God lived a human life in an extraordinary way, calling his disciples to follow his Way.
- What does your discipleship look like? How well do you live your call to be priest, prophet and Servant? How well do you live your call to be all that God intended for me?

Activity:

The primary focus of this day is the Crib. Children of all ages marvel the beauty and awe of such a scene. We are given but a glance into the ordinary life of humanity. The birth of Jesus gives us peace, hope and the grace to live our ordinary lives. Born in poverty, in a culture of political, religious and military unrest, by an unwed mother, and supported by a loving step-father – our Holy Family. This is our Ordinary human life!

Prepare a modern crib scene. Our baptismal call begins at birth surrounded by our "holy family".

Materials needed: Photos of ordinary people, an infant child (as Jesus), a young woman (as Mary), and an adult male (as Joseph). Paste, construction paper or copy paper. The younger ones will need some help. The older children may want to expand the family to include relatives. Mary had parents, Joachim and Anna; and extended family members of Elizabeth, Zachariah and John (the Baptist).

Note:

In following weeks after Christmas Day, the Church guides us along the Christian Call to Holiness, with the celebrations of Mary, the Mother of God (some dioceses move this to a Sunday rather than the traditional January 1st), the Holy Family, and Epiphany extending to the Baptism of Jesus. These Solemnities and Feasts take place within the Liturgical Season of Christmas. Yes, like the Liturgical Season of Easter, the celebration of Christmas is more than one day – the 12 Days of Christmas! Traditionally the Season of Christmas ended on the Celebration of Epiphany – meaning Manifestation – God revealing God's Self in Christ – Incarnation. The carol was a teaching tool used during a period of Persecution of Catholic Christians. Each day represented teachings of the Church.